

Responding to a Boil Water Notice: A Public Health Message

Coliform Bacteria

Fact Sheet for Private Residences

Coliform Bacteria

Coliform bacteria may be found when drinking water is tested. This type of bacteria lives naturally in soil and in the waste of warm-blooded animals. They can also grow as a film in water pipes. Most coliform are not harmful, but do indicate the possible presence of other disease-causing microbes (viruses, harmful bacteria and parasites) that are often found in soil and feces.

Health effects associated with coliform bacteria in water

Although coliform bacteria are not usually harmful, illness may be caused by other microbes in the water. Typical symptoms may include diarrhea, cramps, nausea or jaundice with headaches or fatigue. Please note that these symptoms may be caused by factors other than unsafe water. If you become ill with the above symptoms during a boil water notice, you should talk to your doctor.

SAFE water must be used until you get the “ALL CLEAR”

- ✓ Commercially bottled water
- ✓ Packaged ice from an approved source is safe.
- ✓ Water that has been at a rolling boil for 1 minute (CDC- Centers for Disease Control).
- ✓ A public water supply system that is in compliance. Please note that the transport vessel, whether it is a gallon jug or a other container, must be clean and sanitized before filling with water in order to keep the water safe to drink.
- ✓ Clear water to which 1/8 teaspoon (or cloudy water to which ¼ teaspoon) of bleach has been added to a gallon of water and the water has been allowed to sit for 30 minutes (CDC).

Use only SAFE water for the following purposes:

- ✓ Drinking, cooking, making baby formula, coffee, juices, other beverages or ice. Watering pets.
- ✓ Washing ready to eat fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Bathing infants, washing open wounds, or brushing teeth.
- ✓ Rinsing dishes (or you may add 1 Tablespoon of bleach to 2 gallons of tap water)
- ✓ DO NOT use ice cubes from your freezer or any beverages that that were made with unsafe water.

While under the advisory, you may use your current water for the following:

- ✓ Bathing (except infants), showering, washing hands and washing dishes. The final rinse for dishes or bathing must be with SAFE water.
- ✓ Washing dishes in automatic dishwashers that uses a heating element to dry dishes.
- ✓ Washing cars and watering lawns.

Please Note: Elderly people, small children (including infants), and individuals who have poor immune systems due to illness should be very careful to follow all health and safety warnings during a boil water/bottled water notice. If you or anyone you care for has a poor immune system, consult with your doctor for additional advice.

For more information about safe drinking water, contact

- ✓ Your Local Public Health Dept: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/localhealth/>
- ✓ Wisconsin Division of Public Health, Regional Office
<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/localhealth/counties/regional.htm>
- ✓ Wisconsin Dept of Health and Family Services <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/hometips/dhp/water.htm>
- ✓ Wisconsin Dept of Natural Resources, Regional Drinking Water Office or
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/>